

The Iowa Judicial Branch's Award Program

The Iowa Supreme Court has established an Iowa Judicial Branch award program to recognize exemplary public service and outstanding contributions that have improved the administration of justice in Iowa. The purpose of the program is to publicly acknowledge and emphasize the Judicial Branch's gratitude to those individuals whose contributions have enriched the quality of justice and court services in Iowa. Recognition of these invaluable contributions will also exemplify the Iowa Judicial Branch's commitment to promoting excellence in public service at all court levels throughout the state.

A description of the six categories of Judicial Branch exemplary service awards, the selection criteria for each award, and the selection procedures is provided below. Additional information about the program can be obtained by contacting the State Court Administrator's Office at the Judicial Building in Des Moines.

I. Award Categories and Selection Criteria

A. Distinguished Service Award

1. One award will be given annually to a court employee who is not a judge or magistrate.
2. Criteria for Selection: The individual selected must have:
 - a) at least ten (10) years of service in the Iowa judiciary;
 - b) exemplified a sustained level of exceptional service to the Iowa Judicial Branch;
 - c) demonstrated a strong commitment to public service; and
 - d) continuously initiated efforts to improve the administration of justice in Iowa.

B. Meritorious Service Award

1. A total of four awards will be given annually to individuals in the categories listed below. The Awards Committee has the discretion not to select an award recipient for each category, but it should give preference to selecting an individual in each category when warranted by the number and quality of nominees in each category. While the committee may give more than one award in a single category when warranted, it must give awards in at least three of the categories:
 - a) a magistrate or other part-time judicial officer;
 - b) a clerk of court or other employee of the clerk's office;
 - c) a juvenile court services employee;
 - d) an administrative employee at the state court or district court level (i.e., case coordinator, secretary, court reporter, court attendant, law clerk, systems administrator, fiscal officer, etc).

2. Criteria for Selection: Each individual selected must have:
 - a) at least five (5) years of service in the Iowa judiciary;
 - b) maintained a consistent level of superior service to the public and the Judicial Branch; and
 - c) significantly improved court services at the county, district or state level.
- C. Court Innovation Award
1. One award will be given annually to a judge, court employee, or a team of judges and/or court personnel;
 2. Criteria for Selection: The individual or group selected must have:
 - a) demonstrated a leadership role in the development and implementation of an innovative program or process that improves the delivery of court services to the citizens of Iowa, public access to the courts, or the administration of justice in Iowa; and
 - b) worked cooperatively with other courts seeking to implement the innovative program or process.
- D. Amicus Curiae Award
1. One award will be given annually to a person who is not a judge, magistrate, referee, or court employee or to a group or organization which is not part of the Judicial Branch.
 2. Criteria for Selection: The individual or group selected must have:
 - a) made significant contributions to the administration of justice in Iowa; and/or
 - b) contributed substantially to building public support for the judiciary in Iowa.
- E. Teamwork Award
1. One award will be given annually to a court employee or a group of employees. A judge (or judges) who is part of a group that includes court employees is eligible for this award.
 2. Criteria for Selection: The individual or group selected must have:
 - a) consistently exemplified the ability to work together effectively with other employees to achieve established goals and boost morale; and
 - b) helped create a work environment where teamwork typifies working relationships.

F. Customer Service Award

1. One award will be given annually to a court employee or a group of employees. A judge (or judges) who is part of a group that includes court employees is eligible for this award.
2. Criteria for Selection: The individual or group selected must have:
 - a) maintained a consistent level of superior service to the public, attorneys, judges, and others who utilize court services; and
 - b) significantly improved court services and the public image of the court at the county, district or state level.

G. Other Forms of Recognition

1. The State Court Administrator may authorize the Awards Committee to adopt a procedure for recognizing the exemplary service of nominees not selected for the categories of awards listed above.
2. If the Awards Committee adopts such a procedure, it will have the discretion to determine who is selected for recognition.

II. Program Administration

- A. The State Court Administrator will administer and oversee the exemplary service award program.
- B. To assist the State Court Administrator in administering the program, the Chief Justice may appoint a Judicial Branch Awards Committee (hereafter referred to as the Awards Committee) and assign designated terms to each committee member.
- C. The Awards Committee will be responsible for developing and implementing the awards program. Its specific functions will include drafting a written description of the program and its protocol, developing nomination forms, soliciting nominees for the awards, selecting award recipients and performing other necessary functions related to ongoing program administration.

III. Selection Procedures

- A. Any judge, court employee, government official, or citizen of Iowa may nominate a candidate for one of the Judicial Branch's exemplary service awards. While a person may be nominated for more than one award at the same time, no person shall receive more than one award in any given year. Judicial Branch personnel who have terminated their employment with the judiciary are still deemed eligible for the awards if they had been employed with the Judicial Branch on or after July 1 of the year preceding the presentation of the award.
- B. Persons submitting nominations must submit them on a form provided by the Awards Committee or in a format which essentially conforms to the

substance of the Committee's form. A person making a nomination may not nominate the same person for more than one award.

- C. The Awards Committee will only consider nominations received by the established deadline it sets each year.
- D. The Awards Committee must have a quorum present when it selects award finalists for submission to the Judicial Council.
- E. No member of the Awards Committee is eligible as an individual recipient to receive any of the exemplary service awards while serving on the committee. However, if a committee member is nominated as part of a group nomination, the member is eligible without resigning from the committee as long as the member does not participate in the discussion or voting for the award.
- F. The Awards Committee will have the discretion to move a nominee to an award category different from the initial nomination category if it determines that the new category is more appropriate and in the best interests of the nominee.

IV. Presentation of Awards

- A. The Chief Justice or the Chief Justice's designee will present the awards at a statewide ceremony each year. Each district is also encouraged to sponsor local ceremonies for award recipients from the district.
- B. Award presentations should be featured in the *Bench Press* as a further means of recognizing and honoring those individuals or organizations who have strengthened the Iowa court system by their work and devotion.